



Public Information

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Office of Traffic Safety

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Nevadans are Still Buckling up at Record Rates

*Survey Results Confirm a 91.2% 2006 Safety Belt Use Rate for Nevada
but fatal victims of car crashes still only buckling up half the time*

Carson City, NV~ A survey commissioned by the Nevada Department of Public Safety confirmed the fact that Nevadans are continuing to use safety belts at a record rate. The statistics, compiled by the University of Nevada Las Vegas – Transportation Research Center, indicate that safety belt use in Nevada reached 91.2% in 2006, just slightly down from the 94.8% observed in 2005.

“Seat belts are still the most effective device for saving the lives of motorists and it is encouraging to continue to see this level of use in Nevada,” said Chuck Abbott, Chief of DPS’ Office of Traffic Safety. “Saving lives through education is one of the Department of Public Safety’s highest priorities and the more people we can get to buckle up, the better.”

In 2005, Nevada posted a seatbelt use rate of 94.8% compared to the national rate of 82%. “The national rate is based on states with primary and secondary enforcement laws,” said Abbott. “A driver in a state with a secondary enforcement law can only be cited for not wearing a safety belt if he or she is pulled over for another unrelated offense. Of those states with secondary laws, which include Nevada, preliminary results indicate we are number one in usage for 2006,” he continued.

Estimates from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) suggest that the increase in safety belt usage from 86% in 2004 to 94% in 2005 in Nevada saved approximately eight lives; conversely, the decrease to 91% safety belt usage in 2006 has so far equated to seven lives needlessly lost. Half of those who die in fatal crashes would have survived had they been buckled up.

According to the DPS - Office of Traffic Safety, the maintenance of safety belt use is in large part a result of the outstanding efforts of law enforcement who aggressively enforce safety belt and other traffic laws, and media blitzes such as this month’s DPS “Click it or Ticket~Area 51 Alien” campaign. Almost all of Nevada’s law enforcement agencies have participated in this “Joining Forces” program annually since 2002 (2002 safety belt usage rate: 74.9%).

The UNLV survey, conducted in June and July of this year, also disclosed that female drivers buckle up at a higher rate (92.3%) than males (89.1%). SUV and mini-van front seat occupants were buckled up in 91.0% of the observations while pickup occupants had the lowest seat belt use rate at 83.5%. The percentage of passengers in sedans and station wagons who were buckled in was recorded as 93.0%.

Safety belt usage among Nevada population groups reflect the following:

- Latino: 85.6% usage rate in 2006, compared to a 90.2% rate in 2005.
- Caucasian: 91% usage rate in 2006, compared to a 95% rate in 2005
- African American 87.2% usage rate in 2006, compared to a 91.4% rate in 2005
- Other population groups at 94.2% usage rate in 2006, compared to a 96.1% rate in 2005 (more)

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Finally, child safety seat usage in 2006 was only 55.4%, compared to a national usage rate of 85% overall. The state’s survey was based on observations of children under age six and 60 pounds, as per Nevada law requirements. The State is working closely with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, or NHTSA, to determine why there is such a variance in usage rates, and how to address the low usage rate of child restraints in Nevada.

For more information or for a copy of the survey results, contact Chief Chuck Abbott at the Department of Public Safety’s Office of Traffic Safety at 775-684-7469.

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